

CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of fabricating an optical attenuator comprising the steps of:

- a. arranging a first end face of a first optical fiber and a second end face of a second optical fiber so that they face one another in close proximity;
- b. laterally offsetting from one another the first and second ~~ends~~ end faces of the optical fibers;
- c. fusing the first end face of the first fiber to the second end face of the second fiber to create a fusion splice;
- d. measuring attenuation imposed on an optical signal transmitted from the first to the second optical fiber and through the fusion splice to determine an initial deviation in attenuation from a prescribed value;
- e. re-fusing the fusion splice while exerting an axially directed force on the first and second ~~ends~~ end faces of the optical fiber;
- f. repeating step (d) to determine a subsequent deviation in attenuation from the prescribed value;
- g. repeating step (e) to reduce the subsequent deviation in attenuation;
- h. if necessary, repeating steps (f) and (g) until a resulting deviation in attenuation falls within a prescribed tolerance.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the initial deviation results in an attenuation that is less than the prescribed value and the axially directed force compresses the first and second ~~ends~~ end faces of the fibers.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the initial deviation results in an attenuation that is greater than the prescribed value and the axially directed force pulls the first and second ~~ends~~ end faces of the fibers apart from one another.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the prescribed tolerance is less than or equal to ± 0.05 dB.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of creating a fusion splice is performed by an electric discharge fusion splicer.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the first and second optical fibers are single mode fibers.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the first and second optical fibers are multimode fibers.

8. (Original) A fusion splice optical attenuator formed in accordance with the method of claim 1.

9. (Original) A fusion splice optical attenuator formed in accordance with the method of claim 6.